

## Be careful when you're mowing .....

Peter has just bought a new mulching mower. This impressive beast whizzes the grass around into tiny pieces and blows it back down into the turf. Which makes the toadlet problem even more pressing!

At this time of the year mowing is a fraught experience - the area in front of the mower has to be attentively scanned for the slightest movement which might indicate a toadlet lurking in the grass. With a bit of luck it will waddle away just in time, or the eagle-eyed mower driver will stop just in time, but I assume that there are a few each year which go undetected .....

The odd thing is that we don't know where these little toadlets come from - there are quite a few of them so you would assume that they come from our pond. However we have never seen toadspawn or "toadpoles" in the pond though we see adult toads in the garden regularly. We have one that often sits on the bottom ledge of the conservatory window (outside I hasten to add) waiting for any flies and moths attracted to the warmth and sometimes they sit underneath the outside light waiting for stray moths or flies that fall to the ground. If we leave the conservatory door open at night then we are likely to find one lurking behind the cacti pots.



Toads seem very common in our area, unlike frogs which are not, despite that fact the Dale folk are called "Frogs". As far as I know, the reason for this, and indeed the reason for the scarcity of frogs (home-made ones not withstanding!) is not known - I don't think I have even heard any theories! Let me know if you have any ideas.

One place to get a really good view of toad tadpoles is the small pond just inland of the coast path, just beyond Castlebeach. This year this little pond was simply alive with them.

In July when we had our "Dragonfly and Moth Morning", the children did some pond dipping and much to my surprise they found some extremely tiny newts. They were so



small it was easy to mistake them for damselfly larvae. I have seen adult palmate newts in the pond in the spring so I assumed they bred but have never seen the tadpoles before. I had rather forgotten about this until last week when Peter spotted something crawling through the grass on the lawn - it was a tiny, recently emerged newt making its way through the short lawn grass to a safe haven in the long grass beyond. So now the mowing is even more difficult - not only toadlets but newtlets too!

P.S. These recently emerged newts are called "Efts" which is the word once used for newts generally.

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